

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-11 ISO-00 AID-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
FRB-03 INR-10 NSAE-00 ICA-11 TRSE-00 XMB-02
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-----040559 211122Z /11

R 181541Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6272
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY ATHENS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY DOHA
AMCONSUL DHAHRAN
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY MANAMA
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT
USLO RIYADH

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 07866

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ETRD, BA, UK, US
SUBJECT: UK ANTI-BOYCOTT LEGISLATION

REF: (A) LONDON 6778 (NOTAL); (B) DOHA 639; (C) MANAMA
1126

1. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION FROM REF A IS PROVIDED
FOR THE BACKGROUND OF INFO ADDRESSEES.
2. THE UK FOREIGN BOYCOTT BILL WAS INTRODUCED EARLIER
THIS YEAR BY LORD BYERS, LEADER OF THE LIBERAL PARTY IN
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THE HOUSE OF LORDS. THE BILL CLOSELY PARALLELS THE
U.S. EXPORT ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENTS OF 1977 AND IN-
CLUDES THE FOLLOWING MAIN ELEMENTS:

(A) THE BILL WOULD MAKE IT AN OFFENSE TO "DISCRIMINATE
AGAINST OR REFUSE TO DO BUSINESS WITH ANY OTHER PERSON
IN FURTHERANCE OF A FOREIGN BOYCOTT OR IN RESPONSE TO A

FOREIGN BOYCOTT REQUEST OR CONDITION" OR "TO SEEK OR PROVIDE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING ANOTHER PERSON'S RELIGION, RACIAL OR NATIONAL ORIGIN, BUSINESS CONNECTIONS OR MEMBERSHIP OF OR CONNECTION WITH ANY ORGANIZATION OF WHATEVER NATURE IF SUCH INFORMATION IS SOUGHT OR PROVIDED EITHER FOR THE PURPOSE OF FURTHERING A FOREIGN BOYCOTT OR IN CONSEQUENCE OF A FOREIGN BOYCOTT REQUEST OR CONDITION."

(B) A "FOREIGN BOYCOTT" IS DEFINED AS "ANY POLICY ADOPTED BY, OR ANY ACTION TAKEN BY, A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT OR THE AGENCY OF A FOREIGN GOVERNMENT FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISCRIMINATING AGAINST ANY OTHER NATION OR ANY OTHER NATION'S CITIZENS, OR ANY RELIGIOUS, ETHNICAL OR POLITICAL GROUP IN THE COURSE OF TRADE OF BUSINESS."

(C) THE PENALTIES INCLUDE FINES UP TO 10,000 POUNDS FOR INDIVIDUALS AND 100,000 POUNDS FOR COMPANIES, AS WELL AS IMPRISONMENT UP TO TWO YEARS.

3. THE PRESENT LABOR GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN UNDER SOME INCREASED PRESSURE IN THE UK TO TAKE A STRONGER LINE AGAINST THE BOYCOTT, BUT THE LOBBY GROUPS HAVE NOT HAD ANY SIGNIFICANT IMPACT AND THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICY REMAINS ESSENTIALLY UNCHANGED. IT "OPPOSES AND DEPLORES ALL TRADE BOYCOTTS THAT LACK INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AND CONFIDENTIAL

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AUTHORITY. IT IS FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL FIRM TO DECIDE IN THE LIGHT OF ITS OWN COMMERCIAL INTERESTS WHAT ITS ATTITUDE IS TO BE TOWARD THE BOYCOTT." (FYI: THE UN BOYCOTT AGAINST RHODESIA IS CURRENTLY THE ONLY BOYCOTT OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED BY THE UK GOVERNMENT.)

4. WE SEE NO LIKELIHOOD THAT THIS BASIC POSITION WILL BE ALTERED IN THE NEAR FUTURE. IT HAS BEEN A LONG-STANDING GOVERNMENT POLICY AND HAS IN RECENT YEARS BEEN BASED ON THE BELIEF THAT THE ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES FOR BRITAIN OF A STRONG ANTI-BOYCOTT STANCE WOULD BE SEVERE. AS BRITAIN HAS CONTINUED TO HAVE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, THERE HAS BEEN A STRENGTHENING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW THAT U.S.-TYPE ACTION IS A LUXURY BRITAIN CANNOT AFFORD.

5. THE GOVERNMENT OPPOSES THE BYERS INITIATIVE. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY ALSO OPPOSES ANTI-BOYCOTT LEGISLATION AND DOES NOT INTEND TO SUPPORT SUCH MEASURES. REGARDLESS OF WHAT ACTION THE HOUSE OF LORDS SHOULD TAKE, THERE IS ALMOST NO CHANCE OF GETTING THE BILL ON THE COMMONS CALENDAR FOR THE CURRENT SESSION OR, IF IT SHOULD COME TO A VOTE, OF ITS PASSING. LOOKING AHEAD SOMEWHAT

FURTHER, WE SEE VERY LITTLE PROBABILITY OF SUCH A BILL
BECOMING LAW IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, EVEN IF THERE
SHOULD BE A CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN THE NEXT ELECTION.
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